# MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
(Formerly Bureau of Health)
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\*\*ADVISORY - Important Information \*\*

### 2009PHADV023

TO: Hospitals, Infection Control Practitioners, Laboratories, Childcare Providers,

Public Health Nurses, Healthcare Providers, Public Health, and School Nurses

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

**SUBJECT:** Pertussis Outbreak in Penobscot County, Maine

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## Pertussis Outbreak in Penobscot County with Updated Information on Specimen Collection

## **Background**

In the past month seven cases of pertussis has been reported in individuals ranging from 9 months to 42 years of age in the Brewer, Hampden and Holden areas of Penobscot County. Ill individuals are associated with three different schools. A number of symptomatic contacts have been identified in Penobscot County and are undergoing diagnostic testing.

Pertussis is a highly communicable, vaccine-preventable disease that can last for many weeks. It is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory secretions of infected persons. Symptoms include cough, paroxysms, whoop, and post-tussive vomiting.

#### Recommendations

- 1. Consider pertussis when evaluating a patient with an acute illness characterized by prolonged cough, or cough with paroxysms, whoop, or post-tussive vomiting. Infants may present with apnea and/or cyanosis.
- 2. Persons who exhibit symptoms consistent with pertussis should be tested for pertussis with a nasopharyngeal swab. Collection instructions for culture and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) through The State Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) have been updated. Those instructions and specimen submission form are available at <a href="http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/etl/micro/download\_forms.htm">http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/etl/micro/download\_forms.htm</a> Serologic testing has not been well standardized and is not recommended.
- 3. Individuals with suspected pertussis should be treated after specimens are collected for testing. Their close contacts may benefit from antibiotic prophylaxis. The federal CDC guidelines for treatment and prophylaxis for pertussis are available at <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5414a1.htm">http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5414a1.htm</a>.
- 4. Individuals with symptoms of pertussis should be considered to be infectious and should not attend school, work, or daycare until they have completed five days of an appropriate antibiotic treatment. This is especially important for persons working in medical settings or with infants and young children.
- 5. Children under age 7 should be up-to-date for pertussis immunization. Also, consider vaccinating persons 10-64 years of age with the Tdap vaccine. In an outbreak setting, Tdap may be given 2 years after the last Td booster.
- 6. Report known or suspected cases of pertussis to the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.